Hellenic Roots of Justice and Inequality and a Jewish Ideological Alternative in Economic Science
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By
David Vázquez-Guzmán
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Para Jehú y Abigail,
Mis hijos más pequeños,
Con todo mi amor.
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ABSTRACT

The contribution of this work is to argue in favor of a more deed-oriented treatment of distributive justice rather than addressing only, as it is usual, the philosophical grounds of equality. This will include a systematic discussion of methodological topics about inequality and justice, based on previous works (Vázquez-Guzmán, 2008; 2011; 2015), and an old Jewish ideological approach will be used to analyze, in a pragmatic sense, how the Hellenic influences of both the concept of equality and also the idea of hedonism enter into the scientific field of distributive justice, nowadays. On the one hand, the philosophical influences of the Greek tradition are mostly represented by the works of Bentham, Marx, Rawls, and Sen, who all follow Aristotle to some extent, and an overall philosophical discussion of these approaches will make clear that the Marxist view of economic inequality, not only the secular view, which sees this issue as a problem of exploitation, but also the view that includes religious influences, such as within Catholic, Protestant, and the Rabbinic traditions, which see wealth pejoratively, is to be rejected altogether. Then, a design for a governmental intervention mechanism to reduce inequality that includes individual responsibility will be sketched out. I will outline, from the Jewish tradition, the oldest version of justice that focuses on urgent transfers to the poor, yet I will comment that our present knowledge of Jewish Rabbinic tradition, though still grounded on pragmatic actions, still lacks efficacy, mostly because of the several rules to follow in the halakha making the justice process “bureaucratic;” then, an old simple ideal of a transfer scheme towards the poor, written in the Torah and, later, exposed by early Christians will be emphasized, and supervision for a third party will be suggested. Going further into this philosophical analysis of Hellenic influences, a detailed discussion of the methodological roots of the Aristotelian tradition in determined schools of economic theory will be described in a separate section, where the same root of the Greek tradition, in a syncretic and additive way, is presented by the different schools: the hedonic Helvetius plus a mathematical body, by Bentham; an ethereal Kant, by Rawls; the pragmatic Marx, by the Basic Needs Approach; a transcendental mixture of everything in the multidimensional setting, by Sen; and a return to an empirical Epicureanism by the happiness literature. A special typology of inequality, by Wright (1987), will also be commented on, and the lack of
individual responsibility in the construction of this model will be criticized. In this typology, the role of historical exploitation and the focus on the attribute of income as the right place to measure justice will be highlighted as a clear Marxist inheritance, yet this typology will explain why the capability approach of Sen is diffuse, both in its dimensions and in its processes.

**Keywords:** Justice, Antisemitism, Income Distribution, Methodology of Economics.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The source of this book is a methodological section of my doctoral dissertation (Vázquez-Guzmán, 2008, p. ch. 1), yet the point of view underlying my study is quite different today. At that time, my mind was trying to make sense of justice in the approach that was most used in economic development, where a multidimensional capability approach was prescribed. At that time, and like others, I was critical of the many approaches to justice, which I saw as endless hypothetical exercises that failed to focus on the reality of hopeless destitution that impoverished people face every day. For that reason, I shared the methodological theory and the discontent with policymakers that Amartya Sen expressed, at that time, but I was not aware of the essential fuzziness and the transcendentalist influence of his approach that was leading to an inconveniently blurred and unfocused definition of welfare. Now, it is clear to me, with the study of the Jewish tradition and its opposite mirror in justice, which is the Greek type of thought, that Greeks think too much, whilst the Jewish tradition focuses on practice.

I know, today, the enterprise to pretend to offer a different point of view, in regard to justice, is daunting: there are thousands of books written about the topic, so this humble contribution might be lost in this sea of knowledge. Yet, I see a ray of light, a hope the size of a seed of mustard; a portion of the size of five loaves and two fishes to feed thousands, because people are hungry. They are hungry because the vast quantity of ideals can never satisfy the thirst for justice, unless those ideals are supported by effective actions, and we do not see many of them, now. We are just waiting for “the government” to do something, or for our efforts to be recognized in the form of tax deductions, and, of course, for those efforts to be publicly recognized. Yet, during these years, we have lost the opportunity to help our proximate fellows, and we have been blaming the rich, the government, the system, but never ourselves. Therefore, this contribution is a calling to do something effectively by changing our attitude towards our fellows, and starting to do something because we have already lost so much time discussing these things. Then, I hope the spirit of Jesus, the one who

1 University of Stirling, my own copyrights.
reminded us of the simple rule to treat others with mercy, as ourselves, will be present in this contribution.

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“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

(Jesus, 33 AD).

Today, the world is unequal, or at least people are getting serious about how unequal the world is, but it is a very sad belief to think that only one percent of the population should do something about it. In my earlier research, I talked about the incoming waves of “equality-minded” interests (Vázquez-Guzmán, 2008; 2011). This was before the violent uprising that started in Tunisia, in 2010, a movement that was known as the “Arab Spring,” and before the violent protests in the US against social inequality, in 2011, known as the “Occupy Wall Street” movement. Now, politicians’ elaborated ideas on income inequality and social justice are an essential part of their speeches, such as Senator Bernie Sanders, in the US, calling himself a “democratic socialist.” I wrote that the historic shift in the focus of religious institutions to a supposed “concern” with the increasing gap between the rich and the poor was a reaction to the ongoing secularization of society, and would drive discussions in this regard, but that was not all. I said that only “discussions” would happen because of this topic, but the fact is the reaction was more intense than I expected.

The reaction was fierce, as if it were the proletariat rebelling against the bourgeoisie two centuries ago. There were expressions of discontent everywhere in the media, and the economists’ world was no exception. In 2013, this issue was revived with an old argument that the inequality of today was produced by oppression by the rich people of yesterday (Piketty, 2014), yet, not surprisingly, a “Robin Hood” type of policy was prescribed. Today, the fact that our world is economically more unequal is more visible, and traditional media has been “informing” us about this fact. However, this is no longer our only source of news: the rapid increase in social networking has made this issue more visible. Therefore, awareness of this problem has been exacerbated by the internet and the interconnected technology that we have access to today. After all, the topic in question is old, but the discussion is situated very much in the present.

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2 In the Gospel of John 4:22, (NIV, 1993).
I mentioned elsewhere that the topic of justice was so important that even the Catholic tradition evolved recently to accommodate their ideals to this new revival for the care of social justice:

In a series of statements to the world media in 2008, the Catholic Church announced a set of seven new “sins” through its Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Penitentiary. These include not only practices such as drug abuse, environmental pollution, or genetic manipulation, but also—of interest in this case—three additional “obscene” practices related with human destitution, such as causing poverty, social inequality and injustice, and accumulating excessive wealth (2011, p. 26).

I explained, at the time, that this shift in the Catholic theology was a millennial shift, for the last time this issue was changed sins were just divided into mortal and venial categories, and that happened in the sixth century by Pope Gregory I. Then, an institutional figure posing as a benefactor should appear: Mr. Ratzinger, known as Pope Benedictus XVI, who just recently passed away some years after being retired, even went to the United Nations to ratify his ideals, in a speech, in 2008, by specifically addressing the widening gap between the rich and the poor, so to ensure that the millennial shift of the institution would be made possible. Of course, he offered institutional “help” to alleviate this problem. In this setting, now, a sexual scandal would be no more important, because that would be related with the “old” sin of lust; now, to care for the meek and destitute is definitely more important. That was very convenient for the Church, because, at that time, they were tackling an increasing wave of legal actions against their priests, accused of various sexual misconducts. So, at that time, the reason given for prioritizing the lowering of inequality was in order to prevent “new sins which have appeared on the horizon of humanity as corollary to the unstoppable process of globalization” (Eccleston, 2008). Now, the process of globalization has stopped, but the Church still has the purpose to “alleviate” inequality, yet we might remember that, historically, the purpose of that institution (an also others) was the use of political tools to ensure material accumulation (Durant, 1950). On the other hand, the strategy worked, because now people are more concerned with social justice than with bringing criminal priests to trial. Not much can be said about this smoke curtain, which exploded in our faces during the last decade, except that, now, we are troubled with accusing each other of the issue of injustice.

Nowadays, at the end of the 2020 decade, there is no politician having a different electoral platform than social justice. Now, it is fashionable to be in favor of the most destitute. No more emphasis on the industrial revolution, on the high-tech industry, or on global trade, but on
justice alleviation. There are people arguing in favor of women’s rights, the disabled, the elderly, the young, the LGBTQ+ community, and so on, thus, the list is endless. Every political figure is trying to make a distinction, in their speeches, between the good and the bad, the oppressed and the oppressor, the twenty percent of the population having eighty percent of the income and the eighty percent of the population having twenty percent of the income, the brahmaness and the untouchables, etc.; then, they are resurging the ancient dispute between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, with its inevitable link to the incitement of (different levels of) rebellion that we are used to. Yet not much has changed since then, just the awareness and the inflammatory remembrance that our world is unequal.

Social problems, like forced migration, unemployment, effects of economic crisis, hate crimes, and any sort of intolerance, are tied to wealth and income distribution. Migrants—Africans to Europe or Latin Americans travelling to the United States—have no choice other than to migrate because it is said that there are no opportunities in their host country (United Nations, 2016; 2023). Lack of well-paid positions in the labor market are blamed on the avarice of the factories’ owners: “Adjusting to the changing nature of work also requires rethinking the social contract. We need new ways to invest in people and to protect them, regardless of their employment status.” (The World Bank, 2019, p. viii). Financial crises are directly linked to the avarice of the investment brokers, as in the Lionsgate Hollywood drama film “Margin Call” (2011), featuring Kevin Spacey and Zachary Quinto, which pretty much sums up the animosity towards financial investors, at present. On the other hand, a plethora of oppressed groups, such as racial ethnic minorities, women, the disabled, and religious minorities, among others, are without the means of production and political control, and as such they face a well-organized oppression and a superstructure of power domination, so they complain bitterly about it. Then, it seems to be that lack of justice is the explanation for every particular problem, yet without necessarily tackling the sources of those issues.

This is more or less the context which informs the content of this book. I do not want to recommend a miraculous recipe for change, for this problem would need a lot of organized work, but to criticize, with responsibility, what has been around in economic science about social justice and to offer a different perspective. This book tackles old traditions in justice and fairness with a critical opinion and a different point of view, one that makes sense today, because the tools available to solve these problems seem to be worn out. Discussions about inequality and justice are

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3 Reported in several news websites (BBC News, 2016; 2019).
usually philosophical in character, but for people who want to do something concrete to solve such problems, the recipes formulated by Engels and Marx are seen as the only practical tools to alleviate this problem, yet these solutions in the extreme are very incendiary. Despite this, I argue that the Marxist view is not needed, and neither is a value-free statement about equality, so less inflammatory alternatives must be considered. I will not deny that the anthropocentric view of the Marxist tradition, which is always beautifully presented, is embedded in almost all philosophical views of inequality, but I will argue that even though this view has been present for many years, it has not been able to solve the oppression of the disadvantaged nor has consideration of natural differences between individuals, as other approaches do.

Usually, economic analyses are related to traditional theories of distributive justice emphasizing equality of result at various levels, and I want to discuss these paradigms to enlighten my critique of distributional theories. Economic theory explains that if we look more carefully at those theories with their philosophical foundations, we might understand and better analyze income distribution in the community (Sen, 2000, p. 60), and, because of the different ideas about what is good, some kind of survey of theory is needed with regard to justice. For instance, some people think that some “unequal” distribution is necessary if society wants cheaper goods in vast quantities, and those quantities should be produced by firms benefiting from economies of scale. These people think that some individuals should have the right to possess more in the society, because, in the end, this generates efficiency. On the opposite side, others think that if we want to consider the distribution “fair,” then all goods and money “must” be distributed “equally,” with the aim of living in an egalitarian society. These examples inescapably enter the territory of ethics and value judgments.

The old Jewish ideology about poverty alleviation showing the care for the meek and destitute, a thing that is clear in the period before the Second Temple and in the first non-institutional Christian practice, is both prescriptive and normative. Even though equality is not a result that is achieved with full certainty, because of things outside of human control (i.e., the role of nature), a more coherent and participatory community will be achieved anyway. It is argued that the search for equality should not have only an instrumental value, as the philosophical views emphasize, but a value in itself if something effective is to be done. What will be clear at the end of the discussion is that there is no other better alternative for enhancing

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4 The term justice, in regard to economics, is usually related to “distributive justice,” different from the concept of justice “as a virtue.” In this paper, both meanings are used and that will be clear from the context.
human welfare than the old Jewish one, because it obliges all people, not just those in government, to do something about others. This view contrasts, and even clashes, with the Marxist egalitarian result, and conflicts with the perennially transcendental view of Rawls’ veil of ignorance, and other similar intellectual devices. Since doing things for the destitute is supposed to be the real concern of all discussions about justice and equality, it should be true that “if [the idea of Distributive Justice] is not good in practice, then it is not good in theory either,” as Lamont and Favor say very pointedly (2014, p. section 9). Therefore, again, another point of view is necessary.

I need to clarify that the Jewish ideology I want to trace in this book is only an appraisal of the lost and forgotten individual responsibility towards the most vulnerable in our society, by then offering a practical understanding of deeds towards the meek and destitute supervised by a third party. My idea does not relate to what is known, today, as the Rabbinic theology, which is a composite of disputes, over centuries, by Jewish theologians. That comes mostly from the syncretic Pharisee adaptation of Jewish thought to society’s Hellenic evolution, and I am not relating to that. Neither is my idea close to the Marxist adaptation of justice, also of Jewish influence, which prescribes a forced societal change, which derived into the inflammatory communist incitement to overthrow the established order. Yet, definitely, my idea relates to the first Jewish written tradition, which clearly established a generalized care for the poor that are always around us, specifically orphans, widows and aliens, the elderly, the sick and the oppressed. This work sheds light on the consideration of inequality, both proposing a practical point of view and also exploring the philosophical traditions that have been so widely used, touching on the issues of justice

5 Psalms 41:1: “Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the Lord delivers them in times of trouble” (NIV, 1993).
6 Book of Deuteronomy 10:18: “[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing;” Psalms 68:5: “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling;” Book of Leviticus 19:34: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt” (NIV, 1993). For a note on foreigners, see Note 56.
7 Book of Leviticus 19:32: “Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord” (NIV, 1993), yet Rabbinic tradition considers an elderly person someone who is well-trained and teaches the Torah (from Maimonides, commandment 23 of the 613 list).
8 Psalms 82:3: “Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed;” Psalms 30:2: “Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me” (NIV, 1993).
and fairness. I think economic science has been relying on a set of fixed value judgments about justice for a long period of time, but there is no reason that prevents us from exploring these value judgments or from realizing that these assumptions do not lie outside economic science, as is usually argued. On the implications of fairer distributions, the responsibility of who should be in charge of making the transfers of unfair allocations is questioned: usually the government is held responsible. It seems to be the case that responsibility is no longer attached to the individuals in a society, because they are assumed to be self-interested individuals who are utility maximizers. Issues of altruism, social responsibility or justice seem to lie outside the scope of traditional economic science, but, according to our research, this approach is not desirable. If we expand the understanding of the traditional economic framework, examining some of the assumptions made with regard to justice, we might be able to better understand the philosophical foundations of this framework, and, then, the economic researcher will have something to offer to the policy maker.

These are some of the questions we will address: is talking about economic inequality the same as talking about social injustice? Is focusing on present inequality the same as focusing on the process that caused the present situation? Why do some countries care so much about this problem while in others the discussion appears to be absent altogether? Is today’s problem conceptually different than in the past? Can ethical judgments be drawn from the science of economics on these issues? Is there an effective and unbiased way of measuring this problem? And so on. So, we will try to answer some of these questions.

I Misunderstanding Inequality: Hitler et al.

Correctly understanding value judgments is important. The effort of reducing inequality just for the sake of doing so might turn out to be a lethal obsession, and a pragmatic approach without ethical values is not sufficient. For instance, the Marxist understanding of inequality has been used with drastic negative consequences. The eleventh point of the Nationalist Socialist Program upheld by the Nazi party contemplated the abolition of unearned (work and labor) incomes (US Office, 1946), mostly referring to the wealth accumulated by the Jews, which were seen by Hitler as a menace. The socialist movement led by Hitler also demanded equality in other senses, such as equality of thought, or equality of race.9 For instance, he said:

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9 In the US Office’s document (1946), points 2 and 4.
Only when we, in the party, with the cooperation of everybody, make it the highest embodiment of National Socialist thought and spirit, will the party be an eternal and indestructible pillar of the German people and of our Reich. Then, eventually, the magnificent, glorious army, those old, proud warriors of our nation, will be joined by the political leadership of the party equally-tradition-minded and then these two institutions together will educate and strengthen the German man, and carry on their shoulders the German state, the German Reich.” Emphasis added, (Hitler, 1935).

We know this movement, rooted in the conscious inability to recognize natural individual heterogeneity, had disastrous consequences that lead to a brutal genocide. But this was not the only example where that tradition was wrongly used with those consequences: in a similar fashion, Lenin focused on the Marxist understanding of the source of injustice in the unfair allocation of resources due to the world’s rich people, saying that not only Jews but everyone having money was an enemy: “It is not the Jews who are the enemies of the working people. The enemies of the workers are the capitalists of all countries.” (Lenin, 1919, p. 8). These ideologies interpreted the very existence of capital accumulation as a disease that should be abolished, and an obligatory equality of result was prescribed, leading to the upheaval of a once important hegemonic power.

Because of the previous examples, economic science cannot blindly trust in fixed interpretations of certain ideologies, which are made by policy makers in order to build “equal” societies. For instance, these ideals might lead, again, to a misunderstood desire for equality of race or to an absurdly egalitarian approach to ownership, rather than to the pursuit of equal responsibility by every individual. The existence of inequalities in the world should no longer be seen as a problematic disease, but as a measure of social responsibility held by every person in the community. In this sense, the issue of inequality might be philosophically understood, in the Confucian context, as taking care not to do wrong to the people around us, but more and better than that, as helpful and effective behavior towards neighbors in accordance with how every individual wishes to be treated, as the ancient Golden Rule of the Torah, retold by Jesus, stated. Thus, the concept of inequality, rather than leading to rebellion, should lead to an idea of opportunity. There is only one person (group) that might not be responsible for that task, and that person (group) is the poorest person.

10 The effect of Marxist philosophy also influenced the government of Stalin, but Marxist believers usually disentangle their creeds from the age of terror of Stalin, started by Lenin, and impute the responsibility of all wrongdoing to Stalin’s own personality.
In the community, so the rest of the people have the obligation to share with others to alleviate injustice.

II Contents of the Book

Concepts like “equality,” “justice,” “fairness” and “distributive justice” are used interchangeably in traditional literature, but it might be better to describe the context of each of these terms, even roughly, in order to characterize a particular aspect of the discussion about justice. The traditional way to discuss equality or justice is to first define it (Coleman, 1987; Wright, Inequality, 1987; Sen, 2000; Gosepath, 2007; 2011), so that the discussion is initiated by those definitions, but the context is usually lost in the myriad of axioms, and so a historical and philosophical explanation needs to take place before those very formal definitions that are used nowadays.

In short, this book has two parts with five chapters in total: the first part is related with a philosophical and historical account of social justice. The first chapter touches on the Hellenic roots of this topic, with an emphasis on both Aristotle and Marx as the main sources on ethical views of justice, and the contrasting view of the Old Jewish Tradition that makes all individuals responsible for solving distributional issues and not only the “one percent.” The second chapter touches on the philosophical background of economic approaches, such as the previously discussed Aristotelian, and also others, like the Epicurean, because all these influences are present in the work of economic figures like Rawls, Bentham or Sen, among others, with a pragmatic critique offered by the ideals of the Jewish tradition. The third chapter elucidates the different Jewish traditions in the present by focusing on the oldest approach, by showing that the Rabbinic tradition did not become very different from Greek tradition in distributional issues, because of the Hellenic influence on the Jewish thought in the Second Temple period; then, a more pragmatic approach to justice is hinted. The second part, which is more methodological in an economic theoretical sense, includes a (fourth) chapter with a detailed discussion of the instruments used, nowadays, in the application of economic science and how they are related with the philosophical foundations of Greek ideology. Then, I end the book with the fifth chapter: a critique of a definition of inequality in abstract sense coming from the work of Wright (1987). I think that all of these contributions would better situate our analysis of traditional justice, which, to some of us, sounds like a scratched and broken record.

In detail, in the first chapter, I talk about the antisemitic roots of the concept of inequality, today, and, for that, I explain the historical context
of Marx’s perspective on justice, where the institutional combo of religion and politics, together with the ancient Pharisaic influence on Jewish thought, and the Hellenic perspective of the Christian Church, unfortunately helped Marx, at that time, to build a negative image of the Jewish, so that with deplorable consequences. I claim, in this first chapter, that today’s view of the concept of justice is tainted by a generalized irresponsibility, so only “the rich” and “the government” are held responsible for social problems. The second chapter presents a philosophical discussion of the value judgments that are intrinsically related with the perception of inequality. Both Aristotle and Marx are a must regarding references, and I contextualized the application of this philosophy that is much pervaded in our Western ideology. This discussion has deep implications, and such implications have been extensively discussed over many centuries by a variety of traditions of thought. The most frequently evoked implication of inequality is in regard to social justice, and, as I mentioned, a sense of unfairness strongly tied to inequality is assumed. In this view, inequality is usually rooted in the existence of social classes, but this epistemological approach misses the reality of natural inequalities present in everyday life—even if this theme is mentioned sporadically—and also misses the fact that inequality should be seen as a responsibility of every individual in society, and not only as the responsibility of the government. Poverty alleviation programs require the operation of the government in order to allocate resources to the poorest in the community, but the alleviation of inequality is different in the sense that this is potentially a task for everyone, because wherever one person identifies another person in a worse-off condition, an opportunity to help arises. Then, I suggest, here, an instrument to reduce this social problem, with third-party supervision, based on the writings and practices of the Old Jewish Tradition.

The third chapter enlarges the understanding of the precise Jewish tradition that I am trying to use, which is the original structure of social security mentioned in the Torah, in order to develop a personal transfer scheme to help people in need. I discuss the Jewish ideology around the Second Temple period to differentiate the Hellenized Jewish tradition embedded mostly in the Pharisaic legacy (that is present, today, in the Rabbinic theology) from the previous arrangement established around shrine sites in the Mosaic law, so I can recover a simple (Golden) rule to help others as ourselves, as was admonished by Old Testament prophets and, most cleverly, by Jesus of Nazareth, around AD 33. I highlight differences with present tax schemes and with altruistic charity models to build a research agenda in a new supervised personal transfer scheme to help to improve social economic distribution. This chapter also elucidates
what I mean by “Jewish ideology,” by describing its evolution along with the rest of the Hellenic ideologies, and, then, separating this Hellenized Judaism from the ancient Jewish literature where the original sense about the care for the most destitute is clever. On the other hand, I will argue that the supervision of individuals provided by the governmental institution around the socioeconomic redistribution of the Jewish tradition has been lost because of modern discourses preventing any (metaphysical) religious influence on the state, yet I will separate the metaphysical element from the very pragmatic practice, where the help to the poor is seen as an instrumental and temporary device to conduce those in need to a more normal life; then, the instrument can be enforced, today, to tackle poverty synergically.

In the second part, which is mostly related with the economic methodology of social justice, the fourth chapter touches on two main concerns for social inequality that are taken as axioms in economic science, and, later, it is argued that the issue of individual responsibility is missing. The traditional view was first criticized by Sen (1980), among others, because of the utilitarian space employed when considering well-being; the space of measurement used to be defined only in regards to the hedonic view of Bentham (1789). The second issue is the motivation underlying the concept of inequality. The deep influence of Rawls (1971) and his consideration of justice as fairness was a legacy of passiveness in issues of inequality, looking at inequality mostly as a Kantian device for moral reflection (Sen, 2000). It is true that, in Rawls’ ideology, each individual is responsible for being part of the formation of a just city, taking the Platonic ideal of the construction of a just polis, but, as Sen argues, this concern lacks a pragmatic application. Therefore, even though there is a well-defined normative framework that compels every individual to share resources with the most destitute, this framework remains silent about what should happen when individuals fail to take their responsibility for the alleviation of injustice seriously. I end by mentioning the limits that the different transcendental (or metaphysical) approaches have by, again, contrasting all these ethical judgements with a more pragmatic sense of inequality alleviation.

In the fifth and final chapter, I use the methodological typology of economic inequality contained in Wright (1987) as a typical methodological modelling of distributional fairness in order to distinguish theoretical components of inequality. I focus on the possible attributes (spaces) of inequality, its processes, and the value judgments that are embedded in such comparisons. These might be expressed as a mathematical idea, once the space is defined. The processes tell the story of how inequality arises and I
discuss the theoretical interactions among the different factors related to such a process. I also discuss the issue of a missing individual responsibility in the very construction of this typology, so this construction of inequality is more likely to lead to an understanding of inequality rooted in exploitation, and, finally, I use this idea to explain why the very influential capability approach of Sen is conceptually blurred in all dimensions, as it is a fuzzy photo from an unfocused lens.
PART I:

PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL DISCUSSIONS OF JUSTICE
CHAPTER 1

DISTRIBUTIONAL ETHICS
IN SOCIAL SCIENCES:
ARISTOTLE, MARX, AND THE ANTISEMITIC
VIEW OF JUSTICE

“I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the nations.” (Book of Genesis 12:2–3, (NIV, 1993)).

1.1 Abstract

The current concept of inequality, which basically says that an unequal distribution is always unfair, comes from the Greek tradition, from Aristotle, but Marx is the one known for bringing that tradition into academic knowledge. This chapter deepens the understanding of the Hellenic tradition and contrasts this approach with an older one, that of Jewish ancient literature, which interprets inequality and poverty alleviation as a sort of opportunity. I argue, here, that the importance of the sense of injustice attached to the idea of inequality relies on an Aristotelian idea developed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (335 BC (1980)), being followed, later, by religious schools such as the Catholic and Protestant tradition, and the Rabbinic theology as well, and that this is present in the work of Marx, particularly in his *On the Jewish Question* (1844), where he channeled hatred towards a particular group he knew very well by blaming them for unfair practices, using the ethics of Aristotle. Therefore, the whole historical methodology of Marx, that is his historical materialism, has its roots in discrimination towards a particular group that was only trying to survive their perennial seclusion, that, with a myriad of unfounded excuses, was

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11 A promise from God to Abraham recorded by Moses in the Book of Genesis 12:2-3 (NIV, 1993).